

2009

Girl Scouts of the Silver Sage Council Visions Program



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THE NEED FOR AN ALL-GIRL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

A 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that:

- 66% of high school students in Idaho use alcohol and drugs.
- 23% of Idaho's teenage women grades 9 – 12 seriously considered attempting suicide in the 12 months before the survey.
- 14% of females in Idaho experienced teen dating violence by their boyfriend.
- 42% of high school females in Idaho have engaged in sexual behavior.

In addition:

- One in four high school females was offered, sold, or given an illicit drug on school property in the past year. (OJJDP, *Juvenile Victims and Offenders: 2006 National Report*)
- Approximately 41.6% of females ages 12 or older reported using an illicit drug at some point in their lives. Approximately 12.1% of females ages 12 and older reported illicit drug use in the past year and 6.1% reported illicit drug use in the past six months. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*)
- Approximately 35.9% of female high school students surveyed nationwide in 2005 used marijuana during their lifetime. (Centers for Disease Control, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States 2005*)
- In 2005, among youth aged 12 to 17, the percentage of females who were current drinkers (17.2%) was higher than that for males (15.9%). (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *National Survey on Drug Use and Health: 2005*)
- In 2005 high school females (13.5%) were more likely than high school males (11.3%) to have used inhalants one or more times during their life (e.g., sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high). (Centers for Disease Control, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—2005*)
- Females generally have had lower rates of heavy drinking; however, this has not been true at 8th grade in the last several years, and at 10th grade, girls overtook boys in 2005 in their 30-day prevalence of alcohol use. And for the last four years, 8th-grade girls have had a higher 30-day prevalence of smoking than boys. (Monitoring the Future, *National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings, 2006*)

**Prevention is the key to curbing drug and alcohol abuse in youth.
Girls with self esteem and confidence are less likely to use drugs and alcohol.**

In order to help reduce these statistics, programs aimed at girls in fifth through seventh grades (prior to their high school years) must address self esteem, confidence, positive relationships, and leadership. This is the only way to “catch” girls who may later become a part of these negative statistics.

THE GIRL SCOUTS OF SILVER SAGE COUNCIL VISIONS PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

The Solution

The Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council ***Visions*** program provides the knowledge and skills necessary to empower girls to make healthy, positive decisions when they matter most. Girls learn how to avoid risky situations (i.e. going to parties where drugs and alcohol will be available); how to say no (and feel okay about their decision); and how to lead with courage, confidence and character. Last year, the Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council ***Visions*** program served 238 5th to 8th grade girls in the Meridian School District.

The all-girl ***Visions*** program is aimed at girls, grades 5th through 8th, who are identified by their school counselor or teacher as “at-risk”, from low-income families, or who show an interest in learning more about relationships and coping with “girl issues.” ***Visions*** is held during or immediately after the school day under the guidance of a positive adult mentor. ***Visions*** is the only all-girl program in Southern Idaho that provides this type of opportunity for girls at this age.

“As a school counselor, I am always looking for new programs that benefit my student population... The ***Visions*** program addresses so many of the issues facing girls in this age group. The program helps girls to discover their own strengths and attributes, provides life skills that help with handling peer-pressure, identifying core values, health and wellness issues as well as societal issues such as eating disorders, substances abuse and stress related disorders.”

-Judy Herman, M.Ed., L.P.C.,
Cecil D. Andrus Elementary School Counselor

The ***Visions*** program was developed by Idaho nutritionists, nurses, teachers, and counselors nearly 10 years ago and has since helped thousands of girls to consider the impact and implications of societal messages and peer pressure, and learn to make choices that foster their healthy development into adulthood and beyond. Girls discuss relevant issues in their lives including bullying, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, peer pressure, and finding their place among “frien-emies” (friends and enemies).

Participants are provided remarkable opportunities to gain positive values and to contribute to society as leaders, thinkers, and responsible citizens. Girls in the ***Visions*** program learn positive decision-making, problem solving, conflict resolution, communication, teamwork, leadership, and are empowered to make healthy decisions.

CASE FOR THE GIRL SCOUTS *VISIONS* PROGRAM

The *Visions* program is designed to help girls transition from elementary to junior high school, a period noted for dramatic decline in self-esteem in young girls. The program provides a series of activities which are designed to develop:

- positive decision-making
- problem solving
- conflict resolution
- communication
- teamwork
- leadership

These skills will give girls the strength and courage to resist to peer pressure and to say no to drugs and alcohol.

The *Visions* program is presented in an engaging, safe environment where girls can discover themselves, connect with other girls their age, and take action to make positive decisions about their future. The *Visions* program is held in conjunction with the partnering school's academic year. Most programs are held September through June.

VISIONS NEED ASSESSMENT

Need: Girls, ages 9 to 12, need programs that address leadership, self-esteem, self-confidence, and healthy living.

Why: The transition to early adolescence can be difficult due to independence and identity development (“My mom doesn’t understand me”), changes in body image, peer relationships, and cognitive development.

Need: Girls, ages 9 to 12, need programs that meet in an inclusive all-girl environment.

Why: Research shows that girls benefit most from a program designed specifically for them and delivered in an all-girl setting. Boys have unique needs and interests as well, which are best addressed by an organization structured to meet their specific needs. Girl Scouts provides an organization for girls to obtain leadership and other skills.

Need: Girls need sustainable leadership programs and opportunities that interest them.

Why: It appears that boys and girls understand that girls and women have a harder road to walk when it comes to being a leader. Girls are in some ways harder on themselves. “It’s clear from the research that girls today don’t embrace the conventional style of leadership,” said Judy Schoenberg, Director of Research and Outreach at the Girl Scout Research Institute and lead author of the study, *Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership*. “It’s simply not how they want to lead. Girls today appear to be redefining leadership in terms of being more inclusive and serving a larger purpose.”

VISIONS OUTCOME RESULTS AND MEASUREMENT

All Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council youth development programs, including Visions, are delivered based on the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience— a model that establishes 15 measurable outcomes through Girl Scout activities – including participation in the Visions program.

The New Girl Scout Leadership Experience stresses the delivery of youth development programs that support girls in gaining positive values and contributing to society as leaders, thinkers, and responsible citizens. Girls will identify and adopt healthy living characteristics including leadership, self-esteem, and self-confidence. They will successfully transition into early adolescence with the necessary tools to make positive, healthy decisions like saying no to drugs and alcohol.

The 15 outcomes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience are:

- Girls develop positive values
- Girls seek challenges in the world
- Girls develop critical thinking
- Girls develop a strong sense of self
- Girls gain practical life skills
- Girls develop healthy relationships
- Girls promote cooperation and team building
- Girls can resolve conflicts
- Girls feel connected to their communities
- Girls advance diversity in a multicultural world
- Girls can identify community needs
- Girls are resourceful problem solvers
- Girls advocate for themselves and others
- Girls educate and inspire others to act
- Girls feel empowered to make a difference in the world

Measurement and verification of these outcomes are obtained through surveys and direct observation by volunteer leaders and mentors. As girls take part in Girl Scout programs and activities, facilitators continuously review the signs, or indicators, of the outcomes to gauge the benefits of the experience and adjust the activities to ensure these outcomes are being met.

As part of the collaboration with the AmeriCorps VISTA member, we're going to review the 15 outcomes and identify which ones are most appropriate to set as our goals to achieve in a Visions program. The VISTA member will update the curriculum to assure that we are meeting these selected outcomes.

VISIONS CURRICULUM

The *Visions* curriculum is comprised of 12 lesson plans, which the group can use throughout the year. These lessons include:

1. **Webbing:** Seeing the Connections (Purpose: Introductory - what the girls can expect from the group and from the adult mentor).
2. **Books and Boxes:** Shaping My Path to the Future (Purpose: Allow girls to clarify their *Visions* of the future and to begin to honor their dreams).
3. **In and Out:** Recognizing and Honoring My Feelings (Purpose: To encourage girls to identify their emotions and how these feelings affect them).
4. **A Collage of Images:** Valuing Myself and My Individuality (Purpose: To encourage girls to begin to explore who they are and are not).
5. **Girls and Boys:** Sculpting Myself as a Woman (Purpose: To allow girls to discuss how their gender may affect their future and to begin to craft a sense of what they wish to be as adult women).
6. **Moving In and Out of Shadows:** Me and My Friends (Purpose: Girls can choose to hide, and shine in a group).
7. **Making Connections:** Me and My Family (Purpose: Girl begin to recognize healthy and unhealthy relationship in their family of origin).
8. **Who Cares?: My Support Systems** (Purpose: Girls identify their support systems and begin to discuss ways to change unhealthy ones).
9. **Letting off Steam: Identifying My Stress and Anger** (Purpose: Girls identify stress and discuss ways of dealing with this stress).
10. **Clear Lines: Speaking Up for What I Don't Want** (Purpose: Girls learn what boundaries are, and discover how they can create boundaries by using the word *no*).
11. **No Way!: Feeling Good Saying No** (Purpose: Girls identify positive messages and develop strength to say no when necessary).
12. **Gift Giving: Acknowledging My Special Talents** (Purpose: Encourage girls to see their gifts and talents in a clear, positive way).

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A “TWEEN”?

Early Adolescence between the ages of 10 and 14

Independence/ Identity Development

- Tweens become less interested in their parents’ activities.
- As tweens are becoming more independent from their families, nothing is there yet to take its place. For some, behavioral problems can result.
- Conflict with parents is high (“My mom doesn’t understand me”); they are trying to establish their own sense of self and feelings of independence. This is normal. Conflict may revolve around homework, curfew, chores, etc.
- Tweens may exhibit mood swings and impulsive, risk-taking behavior.

Changes in Body Image

- Onset of puberty.
- Confusion (“Am I normal?”; “What am I turning into?”; “I’m not ready for this”).
- Sense of loss of control.
- Fear and anxiety.
- Tweens at this age are preoccupied with how they are developing physically and are particularly concerned with how their own body compares with friends.
- They are very self-involved. Anxiety about their appearance may lead to their spending a lot of time in front of the mirror.
- High degree of sexual curiosity.
- Need for greater privacy.
- Mood swings.
- Great highs and great depressions.

Peer Relationships

- Increased intimacy in relationships with other girls defined through “best friends.”
- Friends begin changing because of variations in rate of development.
- Cliques develop.
- Friends begin becoming more important than family.
- Increasing concern with the peer group’s values and codes of behavior.
- Same-sexed heroes and mentors (THIS CAN BE YOU!)
- Travel in groups.
- Great concern for what peers think.

Cognitive Development

- Time of concrete thinking; the world is only the “here and now.”
- The “future” is now, not tomorrow or next week.
- Unable to plan or think into the future.
- Right and wrong still seen as black and white issues; grays do not exist.
- Internal control not developed.
- Clear limits and boundaries are necessary.